

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MNVC PFOR ENRG TECH UK
SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT THAT "BRITAIN MAY OPPOSE U.S.
NUCLEAR PLANS"

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY DAVID FISHLOCK IN
APRIL 6 FINANCIAL TIMES:

BEGIN TEXT:

A MAJOR U.S. POLICY STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR POWER AND
NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IS EXPECTED TO COME FROM THE
CARTER ADMINISTRATION TOMORROW.

BRITAIN IS EXPECTED TO TAKE A TOUGH LINE IN OPPOSING
THE AMERICAN PLANS, WHICH WILL INVOLVE TIGHT CURBS ON
FURTHER PROGRESS IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY.

THE FOUR BASIC TENETS OF THE AMERICAN ANTI-PROLIFERATION
POLICY WILL BE:

1. -- U.S. REPROCESSING OF SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL AND
THE RECYCLING OF PLUTONIUM THROUGH EXISTING REACTORS
TO BE DEFERRED INDEFINITELY.
 2. -- U.S. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR,
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- FUELLED BY PLUTONIUM, TO BE SLOWED DOWN.
3. -- U.S. FAST REACTOR FUNDS TO BE CHANNELLED INTO
ALTERNATIVE NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLES THAT MIGHT AVOID
MATERIALS SUCH AS PLUTONIUM AND ENRICHED URANIUM.
ASSOCIATED WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS.
 4. -- A LARGE EXPANSION OF U.S. URANIUM MINING PRO-
DUCTION TO SUPPLY LIGHT WATER REACTORS.

THE NEW U.S. POLICY, IF IMPLEMENTED FULLY, COULD GREATLY HAMPER NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE U.S., INCREASE WORLD DEMAND FOR OIL, AND ENCOURAGE OPEC TO INCREASE OIL PRICES.

BRITAIN AND OTHER FOUNDER-MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED LONDON GROUP OF NUCLEAR EXPORTING NATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN MEETING IN LONDON OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS TO TRY TO AGREE ON TIGHTER CONTROLS OF THE EXPORT OF "SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGIES"--THOSE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS--HAVE ALREADY BEEN TOLD OF THE BASIS OF THE U.S. PROPOSALS.

A MAJOR CRITICISM IS LIKELY TO BE THAT IT VIEWS THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY POSITION FROM A PAROCHIAL U.S. POSITION, AND MAKES UNWARRANTED ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE WILLINGNESS OF OTHER NATIONS TO DEPEND ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND U.S. COMPANIES FOR ENERGY SUPPLIES.

BRITAIN, WHICH WILL BE RELEASING ITS OWN STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR EXPORT POLICY FOLLOWING THE U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT, IS EXPECTED TO INDICATE THAT, WHILE SUBSCRIBING TO THE BROAD PRINCIPLES OF U.S. CONCERN OVER NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, IT DOES NOT SHARE U.S. ENTHUSIASM FOR THE ACTION PROPOSED.

BRITAIN--IN COMMON WITH WEST GERMANY AND JAPAN--HAS NO ECONOMIC INDIGENOUS URANIUM RESERVES, AND THEREFORE UNCLASSIFIED

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PLACES A HIGHER PRIORITY ON THE RECYCLING OF SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL AND THE URGENT NEED FOR FAST REACTORS AS FUEL CONSERVATION MEASURES.

REPROCESSING OF SPENT FUELS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO AFFORDS ONE OF BRITAIN'S BEST PROSPECTS FOR NUCLEAR EXPORT ORDERS, LIKELY TO BE WORTH SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

BRITAIN IS ALSO MUCH FURTHER ADVANCED THAN THE U.S. WITH SOME ASPECTS OF THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR--NOTABLY WITH THE FABRICATION OF PLUTONIUM FUEL AND THE REPROCESSING OF SPENT FAST REACTOR FUEL. THE UNITED STATES HAS NO DEMONSTRATION-SIZE PROJECT TO COMPARE WITH BRITAIN'S 250 MW PROTOTYPE FAST REACTOR AT DOUNREAY.

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Disposition Event:
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